(b) whether a Joint Team of Indian Airlines and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and Airport Authority of India had re-examined the technical feasibility report for upgradation; and

(c) if so, what is their recommendations and whether Government propose to take immediate action on such recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The team has recommended that while Umroi airport is suitable for Visual Flight Rules (VFR) operations only following addtional works are required to be taken up before operations of B-737 class of air-craft could be considered:—

(i)Acquistion of land for extension of runway from 6000' to 8500'

(ii) Expansion and modification of terminal building.

(iii) Extension of runway and associated pavements.

(iv) Provision of Navigational Aids. VOR/DME & PAPI.

(v) Cutting of hills and provision of boundary wall.

(vi) Development of runway strip. While no provision exists in the 9th Plan, efforts are being made through the North Eastern Council for the allocation of Rs. 35 crores for implementing the recommendations.

Procurement of SCSR Aircarft in Place of MCLR aircraft

2914. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Air India has scrapped its plan to acquire medium capacity long range (MCLR) Aaircraft and instead propose to go in for small capacity small range (SCSR) aircraft;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of the services/fleet likely to be increased thereafter?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Expansion/renewal of fleet by the airline is a continuing exercise and depends on the resources of the airline, traffic requirements, suitability of the aircraft type, viability of operations on various sectors/routes etc. Because of the difficult financial position, Air India is reviewing its requirement of aircraft including MCLR.

Passenger load factor on category II and III routes

2915. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the time, passenger load factors on category II and III routes is low; and

(b) if so, why can't State Governments operate their own air services on contract basis with the smaller private operators?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATIOIN (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) During 1997-98, the load factor of the airlines operating on Category II and III routes has been as follows:—

Name of Airlines	Load factor %	
	Cat. II	Cat. III
Archana Airways	24.0	56.0
Indian Airlines/Alliance Air	68.5	66.5
Jet Airways	54.0	71.0
Sahara India Airlines	65.0	52.0

There is no restrictioin on State Governments for entering into contract with private operators to run air services for them.